

**Nostalgia: the evolution of a disease and its evocation through music in
nostalgia films**

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Dissertation

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Declaration

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Introduction

Throughout history, nostalgia has appeared in different manifestations that have always had a common denominator. Svetlana Boym writes that ‘nostalgia accompanied each new stage of modernization, taking on different genres and forms, playing tricks with the timetables’ (Boym, 2001, p. 346). Taking cue from this ubiquity of nostalgia, the objective of this dissertation is to discuss it as an inextricable part of modern society. The analysis will focus on the phenomenon itself, and the various changes it went through, until reaching the final manifestations of nostalgia in popular culture and mass-media. In order to fully understand the role nostalgia has in society, the analysis will focus on the ways in which it can be triggered by the mass media, particularly through the use of specific popular songs in the film genre known as ‘nostalgia film’.

Since the nostalgia phenomenon is considered as being dependent on the social and cultural context that has changed throughout history, the first part of the work will be dedicated to the evolution of the phenomenon. An analysis of the theoretical and historical framework of the different views related to nostalgia will reveal that beyond the concept itself, in the modern age, there exists a collective nostalgic tendency, brought upon by the changes going on in society, that has also much to do with the technological developments that simplified the preservation of any form of history and its subsequent embrace by society.

The notion of nostalgia will be analysed primarily in relation to society, as well as being dependent on emerging concepts such as collective and cultural memory (in the twentieth century). In this respect, it will be argued that the emotions associated with nostalgia can be induced by the use of music in films, and that popular songs are not only evocative and emblematic for the period with which they are associated and in which they were released, but also for the newer generations that appropriated the songs as well as their particular sound. Therefore music and collective memory will be considered as being elements that depict romanticised histories, with which people identify, since ‘it is easier to build a fake or slightly altered passed with the help of mass culture, an altered nostalgic passed being able to creep into the collective imaginary with the help of music, magazines and films’ (Boym, 2001, p. 16).

The function of music in nostalgia films will be presented, and exemplified by analysing the music used in the film *Adventureland* (Mottola, 2009), directed by Greg Mottola, which will provide a more in-depth look at the compiled soundtrack in nostalgia films.

Music, more specifically songs associated with a certain period in time, will be seen as a way to connect the film with the viewer, more so than would be possible just through the images presented on-screen, a technique rendered possible by the nostalgic tendencies of the modern man and his idyllic view of the past. The associations made by the viewer when hearing certain songs and the emotions that derive from this process are representative of the state of people in a disillusioned and history-obsessed contemporary world, since 'contemporary nostalgia is not so much about the past as about the vanishing present' (Boym, 2001, p. 351). Furthermore, taking into consideration the memory crisis of the end of the twentieth-century and the importance given to preserving the past and iconizing it beginning with this era, as well as the importance of music in youth culture and how it creates the idea of a decade or a generation, it will be argued that music can inspire longing for other decades seen as being better and more important in history, that also accounts for its constant revival by later generations. Therefore popular songs will be considered as one of the most important ways for reliving memories and nostalgic feelings.

Popular songs function as well as they do in films because they have a direct connection to people and to their lives, hence to their memory. But it can be inferred that popular music is also linked to generations, to their collective experiences. The 1960s mark the beginning of people's powerful associations of events with music because it is then when music became socially and politically involved, thus representing the sound of a historical period, its soundtrack. But generations are not only born, they are also made. In this sense, music can also function as a tool in myth-making, in mythologizing generations seen as being better than the newer ones. Music evokes a period in the minds of people, a generation that was in itself defined by that particular music and moulded by it, among other factors. Popular songs work to reinforce people's media-created perception of history. Nostalgia is an important part in both reliving true memories and in reliving the memories of previous generations that become universal due to their continuous depiction by the media. Given that collective memory is the source that generated the way in which particular historical periods have acquired importance in the

detriment of others, this work will analyse why and how collective memory is interwoven with nostalgia and is its source, in certain cases.

Since nostalgia is a complex concept that was reinvented in the twentieth-century, as it started having much to do with the new mediums that proliferated in this century, this analysis will be divided into three parts, that, aside from the first chapter dedicated to nostalgia, will present different manifestations and reverberations of the phenomenon.

I. Nostalgia

1. The evolution of a disease into a modern condition

Nostalgia is a word that is frequently used nowadays. People could be nostalgic for a person, a place, or even for certain items that used to be part of their lives. Fashion is one of the examples that come to mind that exhibits a certain type of nostalgia. Not only is there an entire industry based on the concept of *vintage*, but the various trends that make up current fashion are inspired by the fashions on decades past. Music is another important example, with artists frequently being inspired by or directly appropriating bygone styles.

Some would argue that most of what we live and perceive today is somehow connected to a form of nostalgia. In fact, Christine Sprengler states that: ‘As I write this sentence, “nostalgia” yields over thirty-two million hits on Google’s search engine, even when limited to the past year. It also yields over sixteen million hits on Google’s *image* search engine’ (Sprengler, 2009, p. 1). She continues by saying that ‘nostalgia is, and has always been, a concept shaped by the cultural and political contexts in which it circulates, by its uses and theorizations as well as by prevailing views on history and memory’ (Sprengler, 2009, pp. 1-2). It is interesting to note that, in the studies concerning this subject, there seems to be a never changing pattern. Nostalgia was as much a part of life and society fifty years ago as it is now. Furthermore, one could argue that it has always been an important aspect of life. Its meaning might have been slightly altered, but the essence stays the same. We are always longing for something, maybe without realizing it. Even Ulysses was suffering from nostalgia eras ago, be it a more ‘classic’ type of nostalgia. Certainly, back then nostalgia did not mean what it means today, as it had more to do with missing one’s physical home and not this modern, seemingly impairing condition. How the term came to be and how it evolved could tell us more about why we understand nostalgia the way we do today.

Its evolution has much to do with changes that were taking place in society and the manner in which people responded to such changes. The historical and sociological contexts are important factors that need to be taken into consideration in order to establish how concepts came to be. Christine Sprengler identifies ‘three distinct stages in nostalgia’s evolution’, (Sprengler, 2009, p. 11). The first one ‘involved its exteriorization and the missing of specific

physical sites', therefore the primordial stage, when nostalgia was connected to something palpable and had much to do with particular symptoms affecting the body. In the second one, 'nostalgia became a disease of the mind'. This is the phase that involves a 'deliteralization of place', when the longing takes a more metaphysical form, transporting nostalgia in the philosophical and existential realm. Finally, the third phase in which 'nostalgia became increasingly personal, a private psychological phenomenon affecting potentially every human subject' (Sprengler, 2009, p. 11). What will be analysed in depth in this dissertation will be the 'fourth and current phase' and the presence of nostalgia in popular culture (Sprengler, 2009, p. 11), because popular culture is a relevant factor in today's society and also an important medium for analysing society. The artistic input, regardless of criteria such as quality, of a certain era, is the reflected image of the trends, the mentalities and the fears of that specific historical period. Nowadays, that image is popular culture and its varieties. Moreover, the presence of nostalgia in popular culture is an interesting element that stands out and reveals the anxieties of the contemporary man.

The concept of nostalgia, even though it may sound as if it belonged in Ancient Greece, was developed in the seventeenth century, by one Johannes Hofer, who coined the term from the Greek *nostos*, which means to return home and *algia*, a painful condition, more accurately, 'a painful yearning to return home' (Davis, 1979, p. 1), therefore, a term that 'is only pseudo-Greek, or nostalgically Greek' (Boym, 2001, p. 3). Originally, the term described a particular condition, one of homesickness among Swiss soldiers that were fighting in other countries in Europe. Their symptoms included melancholia, 'a generalized "wasting away", and, not infrequently, attempts at suicide' (Davis, 1979, p. 2), some of which, extreme as they may seem, are still present today among nostalgic people. What Fred Davis highlights in his study *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* is that there were other terms that existed to describe such behaviour before, for example *heimweh*, *homesickness* or *maladie du pays*, but the Enlightenment minds required something more rational – a disease (Davis, 1979, p. 2). It must be noted that even though the term had not yet been "invented", nostalgia has always existed and 'references to the emotion it denotes can be found in Hippocrates, Caesar and the Bible' (Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt, & Routledge, 2008, p. 304). However, what Hofer diagnosed was 'a condition rooted in antiquity with the potential to explain both personal and collective responses to the wars, political upheavals, social transformations and mass migration of the

eighteenth through to the twenty-first century’ (Sprengler, 2009, p. 12). As Svetlana Boym states, the diagnosis of the disease happened ‘roughly at the historical moment when the conception of time and history were undergoing radical change. The religious wars in Europe came to an end but the much prophesized end of the world and doomsday did not occur’ (Boym, 2001, pp. 8-9). Letting go of the idea of the end of the world meant that people could start thinking about time and its importance, they could move away from metaphorical representations to more practical ones.

After the Enlightenment, came what has been referred to as ‘the long century’ and the beginning of the world’s close relationship with memory and nostalgia. *Gemeinschaft* turned to *Gesellschaft* and people moved towards urban landscapes. This move brought with it a shift in perception and a profound feeling of displacement that manifested in all areas of human life. Richard Terdiman tells us that

one of its most powerful perceptions was of a massive disruption of traditional forms of memory, and, second, that within the atmosphere of such disruption, the functioning of memory itself, the institution of memory and thereby of history, became critical preoccupations in the effort to think through what intellectuals were coming to call the “modern”. The “long nineteenth century” became a present whose self-conception was framed by a disciplined obsession with the past.

(Terdiman, 1993, p. 5)

It is, of course, in this environment that the newer conception of nostalgia emerged. That is also why beginning with the nineteenth century people started having anxieties regarding memory. There was either too much of it or too little (Terdiman, 1993, p. 14). The sheer amount of history manifested in the form of fear of losing all this history and our relation to it, a fear which transformed into our mania for keep sakes or souvenirs (Terdiman, 1993, p. 14). Boym considers that the spread of nostalgia indeed had ‘to do not only with dislocation in space but also with the changing conception of time’ for ‘nostalgia was a historical emotion’ (Boym, 2001, p. 7). Around this time almost all of the European nations developed a term ‘to encapsulate what they insisted was unique to them and untranslatable into any other language’ such as *heimweh*, *mal de Corazon*, *maladie du pays* or *dor*, all of which refer to nostalgia (Sedikikes, Wildschut, Arndt, & Routledge, 2008, p. 24).

With the onset of the 20th century, nostalgia turned into a psychiatric disorder with symptoms that included ‘anxiety, sadness, and insomnia’, that became by the mid-20th century ‘a subconscious desire to return to an earlier life stage, and it was labelled as a repressive

compulsive disorder’ (Sedikies, Wildschut, Arndt, & Routledge, 2008, p. 304). It then turned into depression, one that still maintained a tinge of homesickness, but ‘by the early twentieth century the modern experience became identified by Georg Lukacs as “transcendental homelessness”’ (Boym, 2001, p. 22). Suddenly, people were metaphorically and literally without a fixed home. It was only at the end of the 20th century that nostalgia and homesickness stopped being related and mutually inclusive (Sedikies, Wildschut, Arndt, & Routledge, 2008, p. 304).

Since the disease turned into a “condition”, maybe it had more to do with how ubiquitous it is now and how it was beginning to be this way then. Certainly something that affects so many aspects of life could no longer be considered a disease, but a condition. Choosing a more mild term means that one can be more at ease feeling nostalgic. While the sense of loss was inserting itself in society, nostalgia came along with it. But nostalgia is inextricably connected to memory and ‘memory functions in every act of perception, in every act of intellection, in every act of language’ (Terdiman, 1993, p. 9). In this sense, nostalgia ‘infects’ every facet of human existence, because we develop along with our memory, ‘cognition cannot be divorced from the *re*-cognition of memory: no memory, no meaning’ (Terdiman, 1993, p. 9).

After two centuries of psychological connotations, nostalgia reinvented itself and shed its older clothing. With its rapid assimilation ‘into American popular speech since roughly the nineteen-fifties’ (Davis, 1979, p. 4), a period that not coincidentally caused and still causes bouts of nostalgia, it started to be a common occurrence in everyday speech, a term no longer reserved for psychiatrists and medical studies. What is more, its core, the ‘homesickness’ referent disappeared altogether, ‘it is almost as if, once lifted from its original context, the word sought of its own accord that murky and inchoate amalgam of sentiments to which so homely a word as homesickness could no longer render symbolic justice’ (Davis, 1979, p. 5). The modern age in Western society and the rise of mobility made the concept of a specific home seem outdated. People no longer lived in a traditional environment and gradually gave up on any attachments that had to do with a fixed location. That does not mean that the feelings and images transmitted by the concept of ‘home’ vanished. Nostalgia was slowly becoming what it is today, a more universal, collective feeling.

At the beginning, nostalgia was simply the longing for home, for a place, something that had to do with space, but ‘actually it is a yearning for a different time – the tie of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams’ (Boym, 2001, p. XV). Moreover, the changes going on during

the late nineteenth century meant that ‘the childhood home’ was being replaced with ‘childhood itself as the privileged object of nostalgia’ (Sprengler, 2009, p. 16). Since Romanticism was already much enamoured with the past and its irreversibility, the impossibility of ever reaching nostalgia’s object seems almost like a normal continuation of the condition. Nevertheless, in a broader sense, nostalgia is rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress’ (Boym, 2001, p. XV). It is vertical, instead of horizontal. For even if one could go back to the place that haunts one’s dreams and that makes one feel nostalgic, it would never amount to anything or solve anything. What the nostalgic would want to do is turn history ‘into private or collective mythology, to revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the modern condition’ (Boym, 2001, p. XV). One can feel nostalgic at home, his physical home, therefore what is this home that we wish to return to? Where can one return to nowadays? Furthermore, nostalgia is connected to the present as well as to the past; it has its roots in the past, however it inhabits the present. This is precisely why nostalgia informs us more about the present than it does about the past. Moreover, the modern conception of nostalgia is inextricably connected to impossibility. We can only be nostalgic when the object that we direct our nostalgia towards cannot be recuperated. Nostalgia talks about crises and uncertainty, about changes and our never ending desire to find ourselves at ease somewhere, somehow. The shift takes place when the impossibility of all of this sinks in since

modern nostalgia is a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values; it could be a secular expression of a spiritual longing, a nostalgia for an absolute, a home that is both physical and spiritual, the edenic unity of time and space before entry into history. The nostalgic is looking for a spiritual addressee. Encountering silence, he looks for memorable signs, desperately misreading them (Boym, 2001, p. 8)

‘The impossibility of mythical return’ is a frequent motif in society, one that became all the more meaningful after technology took over society and changed, among other concepts, the way people view time and life. People before were comforted by the archetypes and repetition that made up life (Eliade, 1954, p. 147). Such attitudes, nowadays, for example ‘the formulation, in modern times, of an archaic myth betrays at least the desire to find a meaning and a transhistorical justification for historical events’ (Eliade, 1954, p. 147). Traditional societies revolted against ‘concrete, historical time’, focusing on ‘their nostalgia for a periodical return to the mythical time of the beginning of things, to the “Great Time”’ (Eliade, 1954, p. xi).

Repetition and myth-making were ways to explain the unexplainable, to make sense of a world that did not make sense.

By slowly separating history and society from stars, gods, repetition or from religion, people were left without a *raison d'être*, without myths and archetypes upon which to project their fears. They gradually became aware that history does not make sense and does not have a higher purpose. Events happen without meaning anything else, life is as unimportant and unpredictable as we feared and we are only here for a limited amount of time. The problem is that accepting the fact that events and tragedies just happen does not make them bearable. Instead it creates more anxieties and a sense of nostalgia for this loss of innocence.

The eternal repetition was, in its essence, a way to ignore the passing of time, or to, at least, minimize its importance. When celebrations, traditions, and myths always go back to the same moment, it is as if time stopped, as if we could constantly go back to the beginning, never needing to fear the future, or the past, because they do not exist. Traditional societies had this advantage and as time passed and people gave up on these traditions, they also discovered that time does in fact exist and that they could no longer go back to the start. People are trapped in a permanent present that they cannot enjoy, because they are plagued by the idea that they are running out of time. The archaic man rejected history, and refused to place himself in a definite time, 'in short, placed between accepting the historical condition and its risks on the one hand, and his reidentification with the modes of nature on the other, he would choose such a reidentification' (Eliade, 1954, p. 155).

Therefore, if modern nostalgia is the result of the impossibility of eternal return, it is also the acknowledgement of history and, at the same time, the unconscious rejection of it. People could not and cannot grasp that innocence that came with each new passing year for archaic societies. Life is never a *tabula rasa* for the modern man and knowing that it is impossible to remake our history or relive it can only lead to a permanent nostalgia. Being the one responsible for your own actions leads to regretting them and wishing you could remake them; it is not the will of the gods but one's own.

For a while, religion and God protected modern man from these views but 'any other situation of modern man leads, in the end, to despair', a despair caused 'by his presence in a historical universe in which almost the whole of mankind lives prey to a continual terror', that is, the terror of history (Eliade, 1954, p. 162). Maybe this is why at times it is difficult to explain

what nostalgia exactly is and how it manifests; how could one put into words the entirety of history that led to us feeling nostalgic? As difficult as it may be to explain the concept, people can usually understand it and know what one means by nostalgia. It is a sentiment so deeply ingrained in our psyche that it seems to be part of a subconscious *koiné*. Most of the time, people are experiencing ‘that special experience, which, intensely private and subjective as it may be, leads “most of us most of the time” to employ the word “nostalgia” rather than some other word or no word at all’ (Davis, 1979, p. 7). The concept of nostalgia, as such, and its development, had much to do with the changes going on in the world. In this sense, nostalgia felt today and its connotation is rooted in Western modernity.

The mentality behind nostalgia is that before (regardless of what before represents: a home, childhood, the past in general or an idealized utopic past) was better. If today is not how we want it to be, then it must have been better before. Such ideas were brought on by ‘modernization, industrialization and urbanization’ all of which ‘evoked a desire to reclaim the perceived opposite to what typified the present’ (Sprengler, 2009, p. 17). The present and how people see it is important for the understanding of nostalgia. Had the present always been perfect, maybe there would have never been an idealization of the past or any kind of lingering on it. For people, in the practical sense, there exists only the present, and even that present lasts less than they would need in order to perceive it properly. The past cannot be anything more than a memory, and the future has not come to pass yet. And both past and future were or will be the present at some point. Therefore, nostalgia is inextricably connected to the present and deals with desire and longing, both of which only occur when there is something that used to be better involved, be it society, one’s own life or any other such trigger. People wish they could revisit the past but they can only linger on it whilst in the present, since ‘nostalgia tantalizes us with its fundamental ambivalence; it is about the repetition of the unrepeatable, materialization of the immaterial’ (Boym, 2001, p. XVII). This is precisely why nostalgia, nowadays, is mainly bittersweet, it never involves negative feelings; one is nostalgic because he feels a lack, and even if he were sad, it is not a sadness derived from nostalgia but from the impossibility of fulfilling desires. It is a never ending dynamic that brings us to the subject at hand. The past has a role to play but in the end

our awareness of the past, our summoning of it, our very knowledge that it is past, can be nothing other than present experience, what occasions us to feel nostalgia must also reside in the present, regardless of how much the ensuing nostalgic experience may draw its sustenance from our memory of the past

(Davis, 1979, p. 9)

Questions regarding nostalgia also lead to questions involving identity. Identity is important for the self, for the security it offers to the individual. Personal identity is the link that allows us to function when everything else seems to be destroyed, which is exactly the threat that modern existence posed to man. In this sense, ‘nostalgia clearly attends more to the pleas for continuity, to the comforts of sameness and to the consolations of piety’ (Davis, 1979, p. 33). Nostalgia is reassuring, it is the proof that there was once a better time. Here is where the selectiveness of nostalgia comes into play. We choose to remember that which was good and repress that which was bad. We go so far as to idealize what we identify as having gone well and create a universe that we can go back to. This idealization will prove important for how media function and how various periods of history were turned into a utopic fantasy that continues to sell and propose an image which attracts viewers and listeners. The 1950’s, as far as films are concerned, or the music from the 1960’s are almost foolproof in their constructed image. They connect to the rise of the need for stability and for something to hold on to when the present is fragmented. Perhaps we are struck with these constructions especially in the case of nostalgia films, where there is a mix of image and music, because they remind the individual of who he used (or wanted) to be, and we want to remind ourselves that we are still that person, that we can be him or her again. It is a form of maintaining a continuity of identity when this identity is threatened in any way (Davis, 1979, p. 41).

On the other hand, people remember themselves as being awkward when they were younger, a bit strange perhaps, since adolescence and youth is always a time of searching. Nostalgia yet again intervenes here, when there is a need for it, and tells us that we came out of a negative experience alive and we can and will do it again, hence ‘the formula is almost ideal: at one at the same time we quiet our fears of the abyss while bestowing an endearing luster on past selves that may not have seemed all that lustrous at the time’ (Davis, 1979, p. 41).

If nostalgia ‘thrives on transition, on the subjective discontinuities that engender our yearning for continuity’, then it comes as no surprise that the ‘nostalgic reaction is most pronounced at those transitional phases in the life cycle that exact from us the greatest demands for identity change and adaptation’ (Davis, 1979, p. 49). People are constantly faced with changes that require such an identity change, we grow up and we change from being children to being adolescents or we become parents. All of the discontinuities we encounter in life lead to us using

nostalgia to befit our needs. Our relationship to it is constant, perhaps slightly altered, but forever present. Collective nostalgia also thrives on transition, more precisely ‘on the rude transitions rendered by history, on the discontinuities and dislocations wrought by such phenomena as war, depression, civil disturbance, and cataclysmic natural disasters’ which are the events that shift people’s perception of the world and their certainties about life (Davis, 1979, p. 49). However the images evoked by this collective nostalgia are frequently fabricated ones, false memories induced by the different interpretations of media that became canonic in the long run.

2. Modern Nostalgia

Nostalgia in fact has always spoken a global language, from the nineteenth-century romantic poem to the late- twentieth-century e-mail

(Boym, 2001, p. 351)

The present study mentioned that modern nostalgia is different and that it is the one we feel nowadays. This type of modern nostalgia can be said to have begun more or less around the beginning of the twentieth-century because ‘what reactionary and radical nostalgias share is dissatisfaction with the present, which generally means the world created by the Industrial Revolution, urbanization and capitalism’ (Reynolds, 2011, p. xxvii). Therefore, the twentieth-century was (and still is, considering that the twenty-first century has barely begun and the remnants of the previous one are clearly visible) one marked by nostalgia. It was seen how the centuries that came before it had certain connections to nostalgia, but in this century, there were two new elements that were involved in the process of nostalgia-making. One of them was the increasing role of media in society, an increase caused by the evolution of technology. The other element is the fact that the twentieth-century was also a century obsessed with innovation and the future. Not only were the first technological and artistic movements in this century related to futurism but it was a century that saw the birth of the computer, of gadgets in general, and that most futuristic event of them all, the moon landing. As Svetlana Boym points out ‘the twentieth-century began with a futuristic utopia and ended with nostalgia. Optimistic belief in the future was discarded like an outmoded spaceship sometime in the 1960s’ (Boym, 2001, p. XIV).

Futurism was not limited to inventions, it was an important part of arts and culture as well. A poignant example is the movement of the Italian futurists, led by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, who founded the Futurist movement that dealt, as the name directly suggests, with the future. Not only that, but in their manifesto the Futurists wrote that people should burn libraries and flood museums in order to liberate themselves from the past. Society wanted out of the past and into the future, and there was no better time for this than the beginning of the century. People were dazzled by movies, impressed by the inventions that were slowly being incorporated into everyday life and could begin to imagine a future where the only way of transportation would be

flying. Nevertheless, it did not continue in this manner, for there is a direct connection between looking too much ahead and being forced to admit change, and nostalgia. So much effort was being put into imagining the future that it was impossible to keep up. Even though the drive towards the future was an important part of life, so was nostalgia. And after the 1970s the future retreated, leaving even more room for this sense of longing. What is more, the future was always represented in a utopic way, a future where flying cars will be available to everyone. It was an idealized projection, and such a projection will always be impossible to achieve. The future was not turning out as utopic as it was supposed to and it was not happening as quickly as it was supposed to. By the 1950s people still did not have personal robots in their houses, the way they thought they would. Moreover, the anticipation died out, and the longing for eternal return and simpler times came back with a vengeance. In this sense, it is very interesting to compare two different quotes, from two different studies written about a form of nostalgia. The first one was written in the 1970's, 1979 to be exact, and considers these years to be the 'golden age of nostalgia'. The quote goes as follows:

Perhaps the first and most obvious thing to note about contemporary nostalgia is that it is very big business. Quite apart from the movies, TV, and other popular media, which are constantly churning out a tremendous variety of nostalgia "products" harking back as far as the twenties (probably the oldest live memory back for which a commercially large enough audience can still be found), thousands of firms exist dedicated to preserving, propagating, and deriving income from some slice of the recent past about which people feel or can be made to feel nostalgic (Davis, 1979, p. 118)

The second quote comes from a study on retromania and 'pop culture's addiction to its own past' (Reynolds, 2011). It deals with the constant 'recycling' of musical trends. Written in the 2000's, it proves to be a gateway into current nostalgic reactions in music. In this study, Simon Reynolds states the following:

If the pulse of NOW felt weaker with each passing year, that's because in the 2000s the pop present became ever more crowded out by the past, whether in the form of archived memories of yesteryear or retro-rock leeching off ancient styles. Instead of being about itself, the 2000s has been about every other previous decade happening again all at one: a simultaneity of pop time that abolished history while nibbling away at the present's own sense of itself as an era with a distinct identity and feel

(Reynolds, 2011, pp. x-xi)

Written thirty years apart, the two books speak about a phenomenon that seems to come and go, as if it were a trend. It would seem that collective nostalgia itself is nostalgic and returns to drag society into the past. Distinct as the two studies are, in writing and focus, their essence is the same. Furthermore, collective nostalgia, in this century, or more accurately these past fifty years, is that condition ‘in which the symbolic objects are of a highly public, widely shared, and familiar character, those symbolic resources from the past that under proper conditions can trigger wave upon wave of nostalgic feeling in millions of persons at the same time’ (Davis, 1979, p. 122). And we are all aware of these symbols because there was a way for them to be recorded and presented to us. Human memory is not perfect, for something to be remembered by an individual there are several ways that can be employed. One requires emotions, something that would linger due to affective memory or its importance for the individual. The other has to do with important events for society that one could never ignore, such as wars. Another way involves repetition which would secure immediate recognition. All of these are represented in and by the media. What is more, symbols can involve personal emotions as well. A symbolic event or song, aside from its historic importance, can mean something for a person as well. That is to say that one may think about the sounds, images, people and emotions he was experiencing at the time when the new millennium began. Or the opposite can occur, seeing an important private object, such as the type of pen you used in high school can remind you of the historical context of that time. Moreover, now people are dealing with media creations that occupy that background of collective nostalgia where initially there were historical or political events, people, and places (Davis, 1979, p. 125). Pop culture is constantly insinuating itself in every aspect of human life and even in such emotions as nostalgia. The average person will most likely remember a pop singer or a trend more than he would a politician, for example.

In this century and continuing to this day, nostalgia has been used in the media to accommodate a need and to sell products. For the past forty years then, films, television, music and the internet have supplied the demand they created for nostalgia. The same Fred Davis identifies this mild manipulation in 1979 and his words would be perfectly accurate for today’s society:

What is most striking and interesting about contemporary nostalgia, namely, that not only is it propagated on a vast scale by the mass media but the very objects of collective nostalgia are in themselves creations from the recent past. In other words, in their ceaseless search for new marketable objects of nostalgia the media now do little but devour themselves. Or, as a cynic might put it, nostalgia exists of the media, by the media, and for the media

(Davis, 1979, p.

122)

This insistence on the past can be attributed to many things, and one of the most important factors has been the rise of technology and recording devices. The twentieth century was the first one to fully benefit from such novelties as photographs, films, television and computers. Hence, ‘not only has there never before been a society so obsessed with the cultural artifacts of its immediate past, but there has never before been a society that is able to access the immediate past so easily and so copiously’ (Reynolds, 2011, p. xxi). The past has been recorded and rerecorded to such a degree that it is impossible to ignore it. It is as if it were an auxiliary consciousness. For the current generation, technological devices are normal accessories of everyday life, however when they began being commercially distributed, they marked a new form of documenting the past. People can now see exactly how a city looked like more than 60 or 70 years ago, through the use of photograph or film roll. Moreover, this led to an appropriation of history because ‘even though we might not have lived then, we feel – because of the movies we have seen, the stories we have read, the radio serials we’ve listened to – “as if we had”’ (Davis, 1979, p. 121). The transformations and innovations taking place throughout the world were succeeding each other at such a frenetic pace that people realized they could no longer recognize the world they were living in, which was different from the one they know when they were younger. Thus, ‘the present became a foreign country’ (Reynolds, 2011, p. xxvi). And when the present becomes foreign, collective nostalgia takes hold of everyone’s emotions, as if it were a ‘universal emotion’ (Reynolds, 2011, p. xxvi).

The second half of the twentieth-century was connected to popular culture and postmodernism (that militated for the importance of this popular culture). Popular culture, conveniently enough for nostalgia, was mostly transmitted through media. Even though such figures such as Andy Warhol brought pop culture into art galleries, most people perceived popular culture through movies and music. Additionally, Svetlana Boym writes that ‘postmodernists rehabilitated nostalgia together with popular culture’ (Boym, 2001, p. 30). Nostalgia could then be expressed by popular culture, through revivals that were shown on television or in cinemas or the ‘golden oldies’ radio programs (Reynolds, 2011, p. xxix). In addition to this, ‘it would also be triggered by the pop culture of one’s youth: artifacts of mass

entertainment such as bygone celebrities and vintage TV shows, quaint commercials and dance crazes, ancient hit songs and dated slang' (Reynolds, 2011, p. xxix).

An important factor is that popular culture depends on 'the Event - epoch-defining moments like Elvis Presley's appearance on Ed Sullivan', the instantly recognizable and traceable moment, 'but the very media it is dependent on and disseminated through – records and television – enable the Event to become permanent, subject to endless repetition. The moment becomes a monument' (Reynolds, 2011, p. xxxvi). Not only do they become a monument, but they become permanent fixtures, repeated *ad nauseam* until one feels that these events were part of his life. The second half of the twentieth-century is also when pastiche and the mixing of older styles became the norm. Stepping away from the innovative drive of the futurists with which the century began, the postmodernists reveled in recycling older trends or images. As Fredric Jameson writes when analyzing postmodernism, 'pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language' (Jameson, 1991, p. 17). This same pastiche was invading (and it still is) every type of media. In the same study by Jameson, he states that pastiche 'is at the least compatible with addiction -- with a whole historically original consumers' appetite for a world transformed into sheer images of itself and for pseudoevents and "spectacles" (Jameson, 1991, p. 18). This means that pastiche is addictive because it is another form of nostalgia, it is the reinterpretation of older styles, thus making it even easier for people to appropriate them.

Christine Sprengler tells us that 'the cover of *Life* on 19 February 1971 announced that "Everybody's Just Wild About...Nostalgia"' and that 'throughout the 1960s nostalgia became entrenched as the word of choice to describe what was, by then, perceived as a national obsession with the material, visual and popular culture of bygone times' (Sprengler, 2009, p. 28). Additionally, 'as early as 1970 nostalgia was even branded an 'industry', one responsible for marketing and manufacturing products designed to satisfy consumers' appetites for previous eras and, increasingly, the styles of previous decades' (Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt, & Routledge, 2008, p. 40). It is easy to understand why nostalgia was so strong in the 1970s since they came after the 1960s that, to this day, retain a special aura. They were the decade in which counter culture and youth culture were, perhaps, the strongest, when young people desired to live in the present.

The 1960s are an important example of induced nostalgia and it is due to the fact that they ‘experienced the most wide-ranging, sustained and profound assault on native belief concerning the “natural” and “proper” that has ever been visited on a people over so short a span of time’ (Davis, 1979, pp. 105-106) and subsequently became one of the most recreated decades in movies and music, hence one of the most used decades in creating nostalgia. Fred Davis called this decade, in his study, a ‘nostalgia orgy’ (Davis, 1979, p. 104). It was the decade marked by the 1968 revolutions in Europe and the Vietnam War in the United States, to name just the examples that come immediately to mind. The decade was therefore a time of strong identity disruptions. The most important and iconic events of the 1960s are constantly re-depicted in music and films, and constitute the perfect historical backdrop that leads to the mythicization of a generation, and also one that leaves behind important symbols that can be easily recognized by anyone. The changes that came after this generation, the civil rights movement, the emancipation of women or the acceptance of homosexuality have forever changed the way we view people’s role in society. Additionally, the 1960s were profoundly connected to music, an essential component in creating identity for youth culture. And the music from that period continues to be used in order to instill nostalgic reactions, because it is such an iconic feature of a generation. Talking about the current generation, Simon Reynolds states that both punk and rock’n’roll are powerful sources of nostalgia

but the Swinging Sixties beats all corners when it comes to triggering vicarious nostalgia. Ironically, it’s the absence of revivalism and nostalgia during the sixties itself that partly accounts for why there have been endless sixties revivals ever since. Part of the period’s attraction is its spirit of total immersion in the present. This was the decade that coined the slogan ‘be here now’, after all

(Reynolds, 2011, p. xxix)

What Reynolds implies and what can be noticed just by taking a look at media productions is that seeing as how the 1960s were so strong in feeling, they are cherished by future generations that wished to have lived in that decade and that may come to feel a nostalgia for it. This accounts for the success of films that portray that era and for music that is made to have a 1960s sound. Furthermore, the lack of a current defining trend leads to this vicarious nostalgia. Even though one might not have directly experienced the 1960s, he feels a strong longing for them, or for the magnitude they projected. Since mass culture replaced history in regards to nostalgia and mass culture always comes back to previous decades, especially in music, people will take the product of mass culture as their ‘generational memory’ (Reynolds,

2011, p. xxix). Our collective memory is no longer of what surrounds us, but what kinds of images are presented to us.

3. The 2000s

Take the headline of a spoof posted on the Internet: “U.S. Department of Retro Warns: We May Be Running Out of a Past.” The first paragraph reads: “At a press conference Monday, U.S. Retro Secretary Anson Williams issued a strongly worded warning of an imminent ‘National retro crisis,’ cautioning that ‘if current levels of U.S retro consumption are allowed to continue unchecked, we may run entirely out of a past by as soon as 2005’.” Not to worry. We already have the marketing of pasts that never existed.

(Huyssen, 2003, p. 20)

Max: I'm too nostalgic. I'll admit it.

Skippy: We graduated four months ago. What can you possibly be nostalgic for?

Max: I'm nostalgic for conversations I had yesterday. I've begun reminiscing events before they even occur. I'm reminiscing this right now. I can't go to the bar because I've already looked back on it in my memory... and I didn't have a good time.

. (Baumbach, 1995)

To conclude the survey of nostalgia, the 2000s must be taken into consideration. The 2000s are fresh in the memory of everyone and an important part of our ongoing relationship with nostalgia, because they demonstrate that we are still much under its influence and it seems as if it will continue to be so. These years were ‘dominated by the “re-”prefix: revivals, reissues, remakes, re-enactments’ (Reynolds, 2011, p. xi). In this same decade, the postmodernist recycling proliferated. Old genres and styles were used and combined in new ways, especially regarding music. This connects again to the technological advancements made and the new mediums that arose. Moreover, all the technological advancements and special effects ‘are frequently used to recreate visions of the past, from the sinking *Titanic* to dying gladiators. Somehow progress didn't cure nostalgia but exacerbated it’ (Boym, 2001, p. XIV). The internet encompassed all aspects of life and was used by virtually everybody, which meant that anyone

could access any type of information in any moment. No longer bound by anything, information of any kind became manageable, easily searchable and always handy. Information included anything from old movies to music videos or books. The past was more than present in the lives of everyone that had a computer.

The advent of Youtube is extremely poignant for any analysis of nostalgia because it is a never ending source of everything old. While before one had to struggle to hear or see a movie, a tv series or a song, with Youtube everything became reachable from the comfort of one's own home. Therefore, when one felt like seeing *Casablanca* or listening to a Jimi Hendrix album, he could do so, whenever he wished to. If 'radio technology brought back oral culture' and 'film marked a return to the visual culture that had dominated Europe before the advent of print media' (Boym, 2001, p. 347), then the Internet marked a return to nothing known before (aside from the library of Babel as described by Jose Luis Borges) and yet a return to everything, a constant nostalgia because 'each new medium affects the relationship between distance and intimacy that is at the core of nostalgic sentiment' (Boym, 2001, p. 346). And the new medium, internet, affected it in unprecedented ways. For the first time in the world, it seemed as if everything could be stored unlimitedly and, as a matter of fact, we are constantly storing more. Data is not material, but virtual, and indestructible in this state. Memory, in this sense, is limitless and 'our relationship to time and space in this YouTubeWikipediaRapidshareitunesSpotify era has been utterly transformed. Distance and delay have been eroded to nearly nothing' (Reynolds, 2011, p. 58). This all comes down to the fact that time and space are insignificant nowadays. The two poles that kept nostalgia in check are irrelevant and we could be living in a permanent nostalgia as long as our internet connection is still up and running. What is more, this type of technology comes with a price because 'the brittle temporality of networked life is not good for our psychological well-being; it makes us restless, erodes our ability to focus and be in the moment. We are always interrupting ourselves, disrupting the flow of experience' (Reynolds, 2011, p. 71). Disrupting the present makes it difficult, if not impossible, to create and live defining moments that bond and build a generation.

This penchant for older things can be linked to our desire to feel something that is lacking in our own generation, those defining moments that shape one such generation. For the current young generation, it seems as though we do not have them, it appears (or it is perceived as such) that our cultural and historical input cannot compare to that produced by the 1960's, the 1970s,

the 1980s and even the 1990s. And people need to feel connected to their generation through these symbols, thus freely appropriating symbols from decades past, in order to maintain a certain connection. The same Reynolds states that he feels an

unconscious drive to cast aside that feeling of belatedness common to my generation: the negative birthright of all those who missed, as a conscious participant, the sixties or punk. As much as they catalyzed belief, nineties movements like grunge and rave also triggered relief – finally, something on a par with the storied glory of the past was actually happening in our own time, in real time
(Reynolds, 2011, p. xxii)

But for the generation that was not born or was not old enough to experiment the 1990s, the situation is worse. This generation, being caught up as it is in past trends and recycling, may not even notice when something might be threatening to change popular culture for the better. And for those that are old enough to have experienced other decades, the discrepancy between the current one and the older ones is significant, and as such they still turn to the cultural references of their youth. When there is no perceivable collective memory, people either turn to the ones before or remember their older ones, because ‘nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups and nations, between personal and collective memory’ (Boym, 2001, p. XVI). The lost potential of our present makes us long for the past, which is not a new idea in itself, symbolists were nostalgic for antiquity and the old Paris as well. The difference is that symbolists felt connected to their own time as well, our generation feels disconnected and more aware of what happened before instead of what is happening now.

Andreas Huyssen identifies another cause for all of this, namely that ‘we seem to suffer from a hypertrophy of memory, not history’ and that we ‘think of memory as a mode of representation and as belonging ever more to the present’ (Huyssen, 2003, p. 3). What this means is that in the past it was possible to “invent traditions” (a term coined by Eric Hobsbawm) but the groundings that were used to make this possible ‘have weakened today to the extent that national traditions and historical pasts are increasingly deprived of their geographic and political groundings, which are reorganized in the processes of cultural globalization’ (Huyssen, 2003, p. 4). This also links to the ideas of time and space that have profoundly changed. What is more, Huyssen states that this hypertrophy of memory ‘can lead to self-indulgence, melancholy fixations, and a problematic privileging of the traumatic dimension of life with no exit in sight’

(Huysen, 2003, p. 6). ‘Present pasts’ are the norm where at the beginning of the twentieth-century there were ‘present futures’ (Huysen, 2003, p. 11). Huysen also mentions that ever since the 1970s, in Europe and the United States there has been a rise in various elements that seek to bring back the past such as retro-fashions, restoration of old urban centers, new museums, enterprises that have to do with heritage or patrimony, television history channels, postmodern historical novels and so on (Huysen, 2003, p. 14). He identifies an ongoing phenomenon whereby ‘memory and temporality have invaded spaces and media that seemed among the most stable and fixed: cities, monuments, architecture, and sculpture’ (Huysen, 2003, p. 17). Not only that but ‘the world is being musealized’ and ‘total recall seems to be the goal’ (Huysen, 2003, p. 15). We are living in a ‘culture of memory’ (Huysen, 2003, p. 15) that will not let us forget and live and idealize the present. It is as if the world became a gigantic archive where memory just keeps adding and occupying the space where there used to be the present.

The culture of memory is present in political contexts, where memory serves to remember and prevent events from happening or even used to instill mobilization. In this context, the problem of created identities and traditions arises again. Huysen adds that ‘the real can be mythologized, just as the mythic may engender strong reality effects’ (Huysen, 2003, p. 16). Hence, the mythicization of the real (and of generations) falls in line with the practice of inventing traditions, which are according to Eric Hobsbawm ‘a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past’ (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992, p. 1). They include ‘both “traditions” actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less traceable manner within a brief and dateable period – a matter of a few years perhaps – and establishing themselves with great rapidity’ (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992, p. 1). The invented traditions insert themselves into the flow of time, but the continuity with the historical past is mostly ‘factitious’ (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992, p. 2). People incorporate them into their lives because, as creatures of habit, we will adapt and appropriate elements that are presented to us in a repeated manner, a type of spin on the Latin saying *bis repetita placent*. They become common and known enough to be real. Invented traditions formalize and ritualize the past, in order to create continuity. This is why the phenomenon ‘occurs more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which “old” traditions had been designed’ (Hobsbawm &

Ranger, 1992, p. 4). It has already been established that the twentieth-century was full of important transformations that questioned the foundations of society and that people responded to this by clinging to the past, by idealizing decades or generations, and inventing traditions is just another side of this process. Tradition forges a sense of continuity and permanence, a link to the past that used to signify in traditional societies a link to the universe. The idea of circularity and repetition that we have lost is remade by inventing these traditions to serve the same purpose. Therefore, it is a form of nostalgia and a way to escape this nostalgia. Even so, 'new traditions have not filled more than a small part of the space left by the secular decline of both old tradition and custom' (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992, p. 11). Just as it is with invented generations, invented traditions are not completely successful in eliminating a feeling of loss, for traditional societies were governed by their traditions and their custom, while modern society only uses them sparingly and when there is a reason to do so, it is not the focus of its existence, it is just another element between all of the others that make up life. Furthermore, the invented traditions 'use history as a legitimator of action' (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992, p. 12), but they were not always a part of history per se. And only traditions that have to do with real history can fill the void felt by our generation. Moreover, an immense rise in memory has much to do with the fear of forgetting. The quantity of facts and events that have accumulated threaten to be too much to bear and to end up forgotten. In what concerns traumatic or tragic events, if they are forgotten, if history is forgotten, it may repeat itself. Such a fear would, of course, be justified, and partly explains the anxiety that, once bombarded with a tremendous increase in information and history, we will not be able to handle it. Collective and personal identity as well are suffering because the present is compressed, it goes by too quickly in a consumer society where speed and efficiency are of the utmost importance. Modernization has irreparably accelerated the rhythm of life and the way we perceive time.

All studies seem to point to the fact that history and memory, more importantly public memory, have been forever influenced by new media. Media thus succeed in commodifying and spectacularizing important events, ones that are often shrouded in tragedy. The example Huyssen chooses is the Holocaust, which has been depicted by so many different types of media that it is no longer just the Holocaust, but also the media-created image of the Holocaust, through films in particular, or other forms of portraying events, such as television programmes (Huyssen, 2003, p. 19).

What is known about a war, a revolution, or any other event which has been turned into a site of memory, therefore, seems to refer not so much to what one might cautiously call the “actual events,” but instead to a canon of existent medial constructions, to the narratives and images circulating in a media culture. Remembered events are transmedial phenomena, that is, their representation is not tied to one specific medium. Therefore, they can be represented across the spectrum of available media. And this is precisely what creates a powerful site of memory (Erl, 2008, p. 392).

Sites of memory are created then by representing the event more times, in different types of media until that image becomes what people remember about the event. Even though historical objectivity cannot be established most of the times, media portrayals of history bring to life a new historical canon. Interestingly enough, it takes more than just making a film about a certain historical event to turn it into a ‘memory-making film’ (Erl, 2008, p. 396). Everything that surrounds the movie, in terms of media, is what has a more important role. In order to create such a movie, it has to stay in the mind of the viewer, therefore it has to cause controversy, to be talked about, and to be properly marketed as such. Even the books or newspapers that criticize or present the film are working towards its future memory-making. Hence, the “memory-making film” as well as the “memory-making novel” are made *in* and *by* the media networks surrounding them’ (Erl, 2008, p. 396). This type of history seen through the lenses (or the writings) of media will be the focus of the next chapter where a byproduct of cultural memory will be analyzed – the nostalgia film.

II. Nostalgia in film and music

1. The nostalgia film

Nostalgia films restructure the whole issue of pastiche and project it onto a collective and social level, where the desperate attempt to appropriate a missing past is now refracted through the iron law of fashion change and the emergent ideology of the generation. The inaugural film of this new aesthetic discourse, George Lucas's American *Graffiti* (1973), set out to recapture, as so many films have attempted since, the henceforth mesmerizing lost reality of the Eisenhower era; and one tends to feel, that for Americans at least, the 1950s remain the privileged lost object of desire—not merely the stability and prosperity of a pax Americana but also the first naive innocence of the countercultural impulses of early rock and roll and youth gangs (...) More interesting, and more problematical, are the ultimate attempts, through this new discourse, to lay siege either to our own present and immediate past or to a more distant history that escapes individual existential memory (Jameson, Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, 1991)

Films are one medium that up until the end of the nineteenth-century did not exist. It is a rather old medium for the current generation but an incredibly young one for the history of the world. Films have changed, went from black and white to coloured to high-definition, from silent to sound. It strikes one as odd how a medium so young and so dependent on the newest forms of technology would at times depict the past. For even though we have science fiction films, there is the other side of the coin, films dedicated to presenting the past. The most evolved technology is used, in this case, to bring to life the past, bygone eras and personalities. And most striking of all is the fact that, aside from their didactic and historical purposes in certain cases, they can serve no other purpose other than a profoundly nostalgic one.

Any act of historical adaptation is, in its essence, a memorial act, it is the attempt to remember something, to immortalize the main characteristics and illustrate how it was back then. People immortalize because they want to remember, even if the focus of the act of remembering is a tragic one, as was illustrated earlier in this work. But when the focus is not a tragic event, when the focus is not illustrating, but the act of remembering itself, we enter into a different medium, the one inhabited by the nostalgia film. A nostalgia film, in the simplest terms, is a film in which the narrative takes place at a time earlier than when the film is released, with the intent of indulging the viewer's nostalgia. The action can take place anytime in the past and there is no

specific time limit. Famous examples of such films include *American Graffiti* (1973), *The Big Chill* (1983) or *Dazed and Confused* (1993). These films, released ten years apart, focus on different periods in history, each catering to a different nostalgic group and generation.

When talking about the genre known as ‘nostalgia film’, the parameters change a bit. They are still historical adaptations, but they are also fantasies. They can create false memories, ‘or at least memory scenarios whose veracity, or relationship to the real, are impossible to determine’ (Cook, 2005, p. 2) and false images of decades that become the norm afterwards. It is important to note that, in all fairness, Hollywood fueled the nostalgia trend not only by making nostalgia films but by remaking successes from other decades, such as *Ocean’s Eleven* or *Casino Royale*, or prequels of other beloved films, like *Star Trek* (Reynolds, 2011, p. xv). Moreover, the new trend represented by high-quality television series is another example, with *Mad Men* (2007-) being a commercial and critical success and a nostalgic television series, whose narrative takes place in the 1960s.

Mass media learned quickly that viewers want the dream and the fantasy and they want to have reasons to indulge in their nostalgia, in other words - ‘the past is selling better than the future’ (Huyssen, 2003, p. 20), which partly explains the success of the ‘memory syndrome’ (Huyssen, 2003, p. 20) and of nostalgia films. Furthermore, nostalgia films are one of the products that can be linked to the memory syndrome of modern times, since the first recognized ‘nostalgia film’ as such is often thought to be *American Graffiti*, a film released in 1973, a decade when nostalgia and studies surrounding nostalgia were in full bloom. The nostalgia film is interesting because its main interest is remembering. Nostalgia films are made to cater to the need created by modern nostalgia, relying on ‘empathy and identification to create memories that are not based on first-hand experiences, but which nevertheless have a powerful emotional affect’ (Cook, 2005).

The critique that prevails regarding nostalgia movies is that they create false memories; certainly it cannot be a characteristic of all media portrayals of the past, nevertheless in some cases ‘manipulated media images are said to take the place of actual events in the minds of spectators, completely circumscribing their understanding of what has taken place’ (Cook, 2005, p. 2). Most likely, ‘what is assumed to be lost is an ethical dimension, in that audiences are deemed to have been duped into accepting inauthentic versions and forgetting the “past”’ (Cook, 2005, p. 2). Nostalgia is an emotion imbued with fantasy and idealizing. Whereas memory

retains a subjective approach to history, it is not as fabricated and aestheticized as nostalgic depictions are. Memory, for the individual, represents the truth, or that particular individual's truth, for memory is as deceiving as any other human trait.

The frequent depiction of adolescence in nostalgia films is not just an occurrence. This age is important in the individual's development, but more than this, 'while the nostalgic reaction can feed on any *prior* period in life, in Western society it is adolescence, and for the privileged classes early adulthood as well, that affords nostalgia its most sumptuous banquets' (Davis, 1979, p. 56). It is the most poetic of ages, and one that will guarantee the addition of nostalgia. Few people are not nostalgic for their adolescence, for the freedom and beauty (or the media-induced freedom and beauty) of youth is impossible to leave behind. What is more, nostalgia regarding adolescence will always be in demand, because it is 'the psychological essence of *all* nostalgia'; in that sense

for Western man the transition from adolescence serves, at the mythic level at least, as the prototypical frame for nostalgia for the remainder of life. It is almost as if the depth and drama of the transition were such as to institutionalize adolescence in the personality as a more or less permanent and infinitely recoverable subject for nostalgic exercise

(Davis, 1979, p. 59)

Moreover, the depiction of adolescence in films has become the norm. Idealizing and obsessively portraying a period in the media has created an intense desire to continue living in these periods; viewers are identifying with images and narratives that could very well be all made up. We start to think that that is the way our youth should have been, how our first love should have been or how our friends could have been like. And since the picture-perfect depiction of movies is impossible to attain in real life, we will always feel nostalgic towards this part of our lives when we did not do as much as we could have, or live as much as we should have. It is a vicious cycle of nostalgia desiring to see the past, and the fabricated past providing never ending nostalgia. Even if what is going on on-screen is the same as what happened or what is happening in our lives, it is always better to see them in a nostalgic light; the past is always better seen through the lens of the camera. The obsession and idealizing of adolescence and young adulthood can be seen not only in the amount of films that depict it, but also in the fact that they seem to crop up in every generation and nostalgically cater to the depiction of that generation's youth: *American Graffiti* (1973) for the 1970s, *The Big Chill* (1983) for the 1980s and *Dazed and Confused* (1993) for the 1990s.

The ways in which nostalgia films set about portraying the period or decade they are focused on are numerous. When screening the past or the present, any director will focus on the need to create that specific mood, to use any and all tools available to ensure that the viewer is fully immersed in the film's atmosphere. First of all, they must create an affective link between the viewer and the past. In order to do this, they require generic factors, such as choosing a genre, one that is already known by the viewer and one that will already lead him onto the path of nostalgia. The genre in this case is the nostalgia film itself that triggers perhaps a Pavlovian response in the viewer, already rummaging in his past memories. The viewer is already familiarized with the nostalgia film and knows what to expect from it, in this sense the viewer is prepared to immerse himself or herself in a nostalgic universe. Then the film must focus on tropes, on depicting what people are already familiar with and it must focus on how best to depict those tropes. The décor is important, for it provides the setting in which the characters will interact. Shooting a film about the 1950s in a skyscraper would be more than counterproductive. Then, there is choosing the perfect actors to portray the characters and the suitable clothes to dress them in. Fashion is a powerful testament to the passing of time and any anachronistic choice of clothing would inevitably destroy the illusion created. But memory is not something we can trigger or search whenever we want like we would an archive, it is not an encyclopedia of everything that has ever happened to us, and even if it were, the facts would be altered by the way we ourselves changed or perceived them. Our memories are sometimes triggered by a scent, a person or some other factor. Media products that deal with nostalgia are aware of all of the factors that go into triggering nostalgia and use the most appropriate ones.

Out of all the techniques that nostalgia films make use of so as to generate nostalgia, music is one of the most important ones. A more in-depth look at the possible connections between music and emotions is required so as to be able to analyze the role music plays in nostalgia films.

2. Music

Swiss scientists, in the 18th century, found out that “the nostalgic had an amazing capacity for remembering sensations, tastes, sounds, smells, the minutiae and trivia of the lost paradise that those who remained home never noticed’. Auditory factors were extremely important, along with gastronomic ones. It appears that ‘the sounds of “a certain rustic cantilena” that accompanied shepherds in their driving of the herds to pasture immediately provoked an epidemic of nostalgia among Swiss soldiers serving in France’ (Boym, 2001, p. 4). One can argue that not much has changed since those times and that music and sounds continue to be an important factor in triggering nostalgia.

Music expresses emotion in more ways than one. The majority of studies made in this direction have focused on music as an entity, and how it expresses emotion, disregarding the fact that music and the emotions it may induce in a person have much to do with the listener and to the moment and place of listening. This chapter will focus on the evaluative processes that relate to music, and not the representational ones that include the awareness of certain properties of music such as rhythm or style. Evaluative processes have to do with what kind of response music elicits in the listener, in terms of emotions and mood. Admittedly, there are certain representational factors that are incorporated in the evaluative ones, ‘especially where some aspect of what is being experienced is deeply embedded culturally or biologically’ (Juslin & Sloboda, 2001). In this sense, an example could be the interpretation of organ music as being related to churches by a listener that has a certain cultural background, even though the practice of linking organ music with churches is more of a convention and not an inherent characteristic of that type of music (Juslin & Sloboda, 2001, p. 4). Therefore, certain sounds and rhythms are sure to be instantly perceived in a certain way by the listener. Nevertheless, these types of musical tropes have more to do with the classical film score, which relied on such tropes to enhance the film’s narrative, whereas the nostalgia film relies on a compiled soundtrack.

In what concerns nostalgia films, music needs to focus on memory and inducing emotions. When talking about memory it has been argued that music, ‘like odours, seems to be a very powerful cue in bringing emotional experiences from memory back into awareness’. This

happens because ‘music is quite a pervasive element of social life and accompanies many highly significant events in an individual’s life – religious ceremonies, marriage, burial rites, dancing, and other festivities, etc.’, therefore the individual will associate music with ‘emotionally charged memories’. Furthermore, music, ‘like odours, may be treated at lower levels of the brain that are particularly resistant to modifications by later input, contrary to cortically based episodic memory’ (Scherer & Zentner, 2001, p. 369). Moreover, when conducting a study related to autobiographical memories that are evoked through music, Petr Janata, Stefan T. Tomic and Sonja K. Rakowski discovered that ‘nostalgia...was the third most commonly selected adjective (after happy and youthful)’ by the listeners (Janata, Tomic, & Rakowski, 2007, p. 858). Hence, a song will elicit strong responses from the viewer of the film depending on his own connections to that particular piece. Moreover, this also has much to do with people’s expectations of feeling the same emotions every time a particular song is played, that ‘stems from a craving to relive the past-as-it-was – as if the past were also a record’. People want to hold on to those emotions, but their memories will be changed and accentuated because ‘the “original listening experience” may be substituted by a fixed pattern of associations, a pattern that is likely to become more brightly and intensely colored over the years’ (van Dijck, 2009, p. 109).

However, as we have seen, songs will elicit such a nostalgic response not only if they have a personal significance for the viewer. The collective and cultural memory baggage makes the viewer susceptible to some of the same emotions as one that has personal attachments to the songs, the authentic experience is not required, since ‘mixing memory with desire or projection is a common phenomenon acknowledged by cognitive scientists and neurobiologists’ (van Dijck, 2009, p. 110).

Music is based on context and on our perception; it has a referential meaning aside from the other various ways in which it can be interpreted. Music and songs are never just music and songs, they are always the products of a certain society, of a certain way of thinking or have a certain meaning to us. Whether it is the song one was listening to when one was in high school or the melody that was playing in the background when something significant was happening, people are constantly bombarded with music, and they will associate it with something, involuntarily. What is more, out of all the different factors that go into creating a nostalgia film, the music is the only one that retains the aura of originality; it is the one element that is actually from the past. The décor is new, the actors are new, but the music was truly a part of that day and

age. The aura of authenticity is a powerful one, impossible to replicate through other factors. Moreover, by providing a suitable background (the content of the film) for the music, films can direct the viewer's emotions even more towards nostalgia, they help 'to control the definition of the object of the emotion experienced during the presence of music' (Cohen, 2001, p. 250). Music has a major influence on how the viewer will interpret the film's narrative since it 'is strong in the representation of emotion in the abstract, and the screen is strong in representing the object to which the emotion is directed' (Cohen, 2001, p. 267). In this way, by combining image and sound, the film manages to instill genuine emotion in the viewer. But it is the music that plays a major role in evoking nostalgia for times and places that one never personally experienced since 'recorded pop music may also construct a cognitive framework through which (collectively) constructed meanings are transported onto individual memory, resulting in an intricate mixture of recall and imagination, of recollections intermingled with extrapolations and myth' (van Dijck, 2009, p. 110).

Nostalgia films benefit from the use of pre-recorded music that is presented in the form of a compiled soundtrack, an addition to films that truly started at the end of the 1960s (Wierzbicki, 2009, pp. 189-191). The changing role of music in films and the way it has become a central element in reception and marketing has 'its origins in the changing place of music in the history of popular culture as well as in specific cinema traditions' (Conrich & Tincknell, 2006, p. 133). Up until that famous decade in music and history, the 1960s, music in films was always music created for those particular films or classical music. Obviously, it is important to understand that music was starting to be used to reflect the changes going on in society. The 1960's and their importance have already been analyzed. What is interesting is taking into consideration the fact that the new forms of cinematic expression and the underground cinema decided to use the music associated with youth culture, because the songs spoke to the people, they were an important part of their life and an important part of society in a way they had never been before. The search for artistic truth led to directors backing away from the classic Hollywood score and focusing on what was really going on in the world. Ironically, all of these songs and practices that were used to represent the present, the pulse of the young generation, will be used in the future to depict the past, as they have become a part of the collective memory.

Even so, films and music have always been connected; one needs only to remember that silent films were always shown with an orchestra or a band playing. There seems to have always been a subconscious need for music to accompany images.

In the early days of silent film, music had more than one role. It was used to drown out the noises made by the projector and served aesthetic purposes as well. The realness of the new cinematic medium, that seemed so natural, made the need for speech all the more urgent. Viewers needed a replacement for the actors' silence. Music also provided a much needed depth to the moving image, a life that it was lacking in. It is very interesting that music was taken into consideration when intending to solve the problem of the lack of speech and of the seemingly dead shadows on the screen, since it proves that ever since the beginning, it was music that brought life and depth to the film. Whereas the historic and some of the aesthetic arguments can apply to the use of music in sound films, they do not offer a complete explanation of how and why music transitioned into sound film. Claudia Gorbman offers several other explanations. Music has persisted into the sound film because its role could not be replaced by anything else. The narrative film disposed of no other element such as music that could, like magic, change the mood of the images. The power of music meant that 'if the advent of diegetic sound narrowed the possibilities of temporality into a sort of relentless linearity, music could return as the one sound element capable of freeing up that temporal representation' (Gorbman, 1987, p. 55). This is why music fits so seamlessly with montages, slow-motion sequences or flashbacks. It makes us believe that what we are seeing is true, and it calls to the surface long forgotten feelings, among which nostalgia, in the case of nostalgia films. Even if the images mean nothing personally to the viewer, the music is what accounts for his involvement. Film music is 'at once a gel, a space, a language, a cradle, a beat, a signifier of internal depth and emotion as well as a provider on emphasis on visual movement and spectacle' and it succeeds in bonding 'shot to shot, narrative event to meaning, spectator to narrative, spectator to audience' (Gorbman, 1987, p. 55).

Music will always have an effect on the viewer, regardless of the type of music used and it will produce a meaning every time, because the viewer requires meaning and will impose one on the music and the images heard. In the case of nostalgia film, that uses a pre-recorded, compiled soundtrack, the situation is a bit different. One of Gorbman's main points was that the classical Hollywood soundtrack (soundtracks made before approximately the 1960s that

consisted in composed music made for that film usually) goes unnoticed by the viewer, it serves as background music, which does not mean that it is devoid of meaning, just that its meaning worked towards creating different types of reactions. A soundtrack that consists in pre-recorded music not only does not go unnoticed by the viewer, but it enhances the narrative experience and accesses the viewer's feelings. Firstly, pre-recorded music means songs that were composed and interpreted by an artist that is a part of popular culture, which means they are forever associated with the period they were sung in. Any piece of music has cultural connotations, belonging to cultural memory that 'is based on communication through media' (Erll, 2008). Music, in this sense, is important in and of itself and as a marker of society. Aside from the rhythm and notes that compose that particular piece or song (as in this study pre-recorded songs are the ones analyzed, therefore 'song' is perhaps a more appropriate term), people will make external connotations regarding the music, the songs will strike a chord of memory, because, when dealing with nostalgia films, we are often faced with the decades that had the most to do with music, the ones that came after the 1950s, that is to say, the decades when music was inextricably connected to youth culture and the sociopolitical context of the era.

Mikhail Iampolski states that vision, sight and looking are concepts that connect to the notion of spectacle. For the twentieth century, the 'cultural tendency to cultivate spectacle' (Iampolski, 1998, p. 2) is embodied in cinema. We need a special kind of memory, the 'memory of Tiresias' in order to make sense of all the cultural messages that a film contains, otherwise 'a spectacle that is not immersed in memory, that has not been granted access to the sources of Mnemosyne, remains a meaningless collection of disjointed fragments' (Iampolski, 1998, p. 2). This memory of culture explains how soundtracks function. Music is linked to the film's text and new meanings emerge. In order to understand these new meanings, the viewer makes use of this 'memory of Tiresias'. It is the viewer that unites, in a personal way, the music and the images associated with it in a film, making it a single text that is interpreted through cultural memory. We would not be able to make sense of all the cultural codes around us, if not for this 'Tiresian' memory, 'typical of modern culture' (Iampolski, 1998, p. 4).

The memory of Tiresias gives us our bearings; it is the guiding thread that keeps us, however illusory its effects may be, from losing ourselves in the chaos of texts and the chaos of being. It is the ability to unite, juxtapose, and make sense of things. Every reader or spectator has this visionary memory to varying degrees. The memory of Tiresias, it seems to me, might well serve as a symbol for cultural theory today, which is also called upon to unite, juxtapose, and make sense of things

(Iampolski, 1998, p. 4)

Music in films serves the same purpose at times, it preserves memory. The viewer's memory can interpret the sounds and images seen by recalling his own previous experiences, or even experiences that he has never lived through, in some instances of nostalgia films. History and everything that it offers become an active element. This applies to both our interpretation of music in films as being an element that produces feelings of nostalgia and one that inspires recognition in the viewer. Iampolski's point of view is especially poignant when applying it to nostalgia, since he states that each work of art will create its own history of culture (Iampolski, 1998, p. 246). This 'involves a restructuring of the entire stock of older culture' (Iampolski, 1998, p. 246). Films restructure music in order to better depict their message. That is why, by using music as one of its primary cultural codes, films are able to inspire these feelings of nostalgia or recognition in the viewer. Music, as intertext, binds the text, in this case, the film, to the viewer. Furthermore, music is 'particularly effective in addressing narrative leaps, moments in which narrative logic gives way to discursive anomalies' (Iampolski, 1998, p. 247). Moreover, music as intertext is much more effective than other intertextual references when creating a mood, regardless of its apparent invisibility – 'the less visible the intertext, the more visible the quote that indicates its presence' (Iampolski, 1998, p. 250).

Music is at least as important as the other components of a film since 'it conditions identification processes, the encounters between film texts and filmgoers' psyches' (Kassabian, 2001, p. 1). The engagements between filmgoers and film scores are 'conditioned by filmgoers' relationships to a wide range of musics both within and outside of their filmgoing practices' (Kassabian, 2001, p. 2). In this sense, composed scores can condition filmgoers into assimilating an identity, whereas compiled scores 'bring the immediate threat of history' (Kassabian, 2001, p. 3). Most viewers will already know these songs and thus, they will 'bring external associations with the songs into their engagements with the film' (Kassabian, 2001, p. 3). Compiled scores open the psychic field and depend on the viewer's relationships to contemporary film music. Kassabian has an interesting view on film music and considers that mainstream Hollywood film practices 'constitute the only musical lingua franca in contemporary western industrialized societies' (Kassabian, 2001, p. 8). Furthermore, she continues, since the United States monopolize the production of music, film and television, everyone will 'grow into some degree of competence in the languages of film, television and popular music' (Kassabian, 2001, p. 8).

Moreover, the compiled soundtrack is ‘put together on the assumption that the audience will recognize the artist, the song, or, at a minimum, a familiar style’ (Schumway, 1999, p. 37). The rock soundtrack is always linked to history and can never be neutral, in this sense.

Tincknell views MTV as being an important factor in the rise of popular music used as soundtracks, since MTV aired music videos and ‘shaped the development of a video-derived aesthetic of stylized images directly matched to the structure of a song in a way that clearly influenced the use of music in film’ (Conrich & Tincknell, 2006, p. 134). Therefore, we can view the soundtrack film as a hybrid between the musical and the classical Hollywood score. The films kept the tradition of expressing feelings through music and extended their references to popular culture.

It has been established that the media and films change how we view history but the compiled score revisits as well as remakes the past, ultimately producing a “preferred” history of the mid to late twentieth century’ (Conrich & Tincknell, 2006, p. 132). Furthermore, in the case of nostalgia films by ‘condensing meanings already in circulation through their intertextual relationship to a particular style of music, performer or historical moment the soundtrack can evoke emotions and associations’ and can succeed in doing this ‘without having to produce those elements directly through narrative. The ‘back catalogue’ of popular music thus becomes a cultural bank with (apparently) instant access’ (Conrich & Tincknell, 2006, p. 134).

3. Adventureland

Even though nostalgia is self-indulgent and, in this day and age, it often has to do with media-induced feelings, the emotions felt are still true. Hence, being able to inspire such feelings is quite a feat and one needed by people. In today's society, dominated by speed, any moment to remember anything at all, while being forced to remember everything at the same time, is a precious one. That may also account for the success that nostalgia films have, they are more than entertainment, they are a reason to pause and reflect. And all people are susceptible to this. In fact, Roger Ebert, one of the most important film critics of our times, when reviewing *Adventureland*, the film that will be analysed in this chapter, remembers an episode from his own life that was triggered by the film. After his opinions on the film, he continues by saying that

I worked two summers at Crystal Lake Pool in Urbana. I was technically a lifeguard and got free Cokes, but I rarely got to sit in the lifeguard chair. As the junior member of the staff, I was assigned to Poop Patrol, which involved plunging deep into the depths with a fly swatter and a bucket. Not a lot of status when you were applauded while carrying the bucket to the men's room. ("No spilling!" my boss Oscar Adams warned me.) But there was another lifeguard named Toni and — oh, never mind. I don't think she ever knew

(Ebert, 2009).

This is the conclusion to his review, which is not even a conclusion, but a memory brought on by thinking about the film. As ironic as his short look into his own life is, it is still a testament to the way this film genre works, because his remembrance has much to do with the film. During the film, without realizing, or even while realizing, Ebert identified with the characters, and relived a moment that could have been part of the film, more accurately, what was happening in the film could have been part of his life.

Adventureland is one of the more recent nostalgia films. It was released in 2009 and directed by Greg Mottola. The action is set in the 1980s, more precisely in 1987. The main character, James Brennan (Jesse Eisenberg) has recently graduated from college and he would like to embark on a tour of Europe for the summer before continuing his studies and going to graduate school. Since his parents let him know that they cannot keep supporting him financially, he must find a part-time job for the summer. James manages to find a job at an amusement park called Adventureland in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where one of his childhood friends, Tommy

Frigo (Matt Bush), also works. There is the love interest, Emily “Em” Lewin (Kristen Stewart), one of his co-workers, who after several issues that arise along the way, will also fall in love with the main character.

The film is relevant to this study for a variety of reasons. First of all, it fits into the description of the nostalgia film, which means that it takes place at a particular time in history, not very long ago, thus a time still present in the memory of many individuals, those who lived it and those who have appropriated it through collective memory and pop culture. It depicts a world that does not exist anymore, but one whose echoes can still be felt. Furthermore, if in order to decide how best to create a media product that will inspire nostalgia, one of the rules is ‘intuiting which past period is about to become the subject of the next nostalgia boom’ by subtracting ‘twenty years, more or less, from the age cohort about to enter that phase of the life cycle conventionally regarded as constituting full social maturity, that is, persons in their late thirties and early forties’ (Davis, 1979, p. 60), then *Adventureland* respects this rule. It was released in 2009, and is set in 1987. The adolescents of the 1980s were precisely in their late thirties and early forties in 2009.

Secondly, its narrative has the appeal of that of a *Bildungsroman*, since the title character is in his early twenties, fresh out of college and about to experience a memorable and eye-opening summer. The fact that he is in his early twenties means that his teenage habits are still present, and the fears and uncertainties of that age are doubled by the ones brought on by this turning point in his life. His identity, as such, is fragmented, not yet developed. Therefore, it depicts one of the most nostalgia-indulging times in a person’s life that is sure to bring back memories, that elusive phase that stretches from adolescence to early adulthood which becomes the template for nostalgic remembrances, since ‘the tides of nostalgia which nowadays almost regularly wash over middle-aged persons typically carry them back to the songs, films, styles, and fads of their late teens’ (Davis, 1979, p. 60).

The plot in itself is not very important or action packed. It is a simple coming-of-age story, when any minor event or setback in life is a tragedy. A coming-of-age story is something that most of the viewers can relate to. Even if not all of the viewers worked in an amusement park or fell in love with a girl named Em, the emotions experienced by the characters and their lack of a direction is something that everyone has gone through. The universality of the emotions makes it easy for the viewer to see himself as one of the characters and vicariously relive the

states he or she was going through during adolescence, whereas the ones who are now experiencing their adolescence will identify with the characters. What is more, the main characters in the film are awkward, they are not your average jocks or cheerleaders (those are still present in the film). James is shy, and has majored in Comparative Literature and Renaissance studies, which offers him little job expectations. His colleague, Joel, played by Martin Starr, who will turn into his best friend over the summer, shares the same awkwardness. He, as well, is majoring in Russian literature and Slavic languages and insists that he cannot do anything with either of them. Joel will end up leaving Pittsburgh. Emily, an important part of the misfit trio, has lost her mother to cancer and resents her stepmother. In the meanwhile, she is also having an affair with a married man, to further complicate her backstory. Depicting the awkwardness and avoiding all of the usual clichés infuses the film with realness, with people instead of just characters. As it was shown in this dissertation, every person remembers himself as being awkward during adolescence and early adulthood. To complete the group, there is also a more classic type of character, Margarita Levieva, the typical girl to whom every boy or man at the park feels attracted to.

The feel and the setting of the film already belong to the 1980s. The adventure park is somewhat of a retro symbol for contemporary society, which is much more interested in social networking, but it was a staple in those years. Thus, the desperation of the characters is felt in their working in a place that is meant to be joyful, where people come for entertainment. At the same time, the film is overtly nostalgic and even more so when taking into consideration the music.

The film's compiled soundtrack reads like a quintessential 1980s mixtape, that speaks both to the older generation, the one that could truly remember the not-so-distant past portrayed in the film, and the newer one because 'songs used in films recall us to our past, or they conjure up a past we never experienced and, through the familiar language of popular music, make it ours' (Wojcik & Knight, 2001, p. 1). A complete overview of the soundtrack reveals that it includes staple 1980s bands like The Replacements, Poison, Crowded House or The Cure but also more classic artists such as The Rolling Stones or Lou Reed. The songs, in this case, are, as in any nostalgia film, used to enforce the idea of a certain period in history, to anchor the film in space and time. This is the first role music plays, on a superficial level. On the other hand, they do more than that, they are used to enhance moments and feelings, that is to say they are used

much like an imagined life-soundtrack would sound like, since ‘music is conventionally regarded as the soundtrack to a life: the favourite song as commemoration, a Proustian trigger that sets you adrift on memory bliss’ (Reynolds, 2011, p. 102). If most people can remember certain songs and link them to a memory, then the music used by *Adventureland*, or by any nostalgia film, is what an idealized life-soundtrack is like for mass media. The songs underline those true moments that take place in anyone’s life, crucial moments that one will remember later on since ‘our personal musical repertoire is a *living* memory that stimulates narrative engagement from the first time we hear a song to each time we replay it at later stages in life’ thus creating a ‘vivid process of narrative recall’ whereby people give meaning to songs and assign ‘personal and cultural value’ to these songs (van Dijck, 2009, p. 11). These moments are universal ones, but the songs that accompany them are culturally relevant, they are known as having been a part of the 1980s. For the generations that lived during the 1980s, the connection is instantly made and nostalgia surges forward. For the others, that have never actually experienced the 1980s during their life, nostalgia is linked to how they have appropriated the music of decades past, and how much they have heard it playing because ‘narratives about music often braid private reminiscences in with those of others or connect them to larger legacies’ (van Dijck, 2009, p. 110). In a sense, music from any historical period after the 1950s is so ubiquitous, and so frequently depicted in media, that it does not stand out in an uncanny way, it blends in regarding most of the viewers, a natural continuation of the images shown on the screen. It is not just the background music represented by the classical Hollywood score, which was superimposed and which would be the type of soundtrack that would sound unnatural for this generation.

In the movie, the music triggers nostalgia for one’s own lost past as well as nostalgia for the idealized image. Even the viewers that have real memories from the 1980s, similar to the ones of the characters in the film, cannot say that their soundtrack was as perfect as the one put together for *Adventureland*. In one scene in the film, the characters, under the effect of mild drugs, go on a ride on the bumper cars while The Cure’s *Just Like Heaven* can be heard. The scene is depicted in a perfectly rosy light, and benefits from a song known worldwide, that blends seamlessly within the narrative and complements the characters’ joy. In this instance, there is the group of viewers that may have the same type of memories, or even an unrelated one simply triggered by the scene unfolding in front of them. But their memories can never compete with the ones carefully constructed by the film. *Just Like Heaven* was a major hit for the year it

was released in, 1987, it stayed on the charts for several weeks, thus earning its reputation as a landmark song of the 1980s (The Official UK Charts Company). It has since been covered several times and has also seen a resurgence in popularity in the past years. Hence, it is not only related to the 1980s for some of the viewers, but for the major part of them, by persisting in people's collective memory. It is a song closely associated with a certain period in time that has many reverberations in the present, a song still played and listened to nowadays. On the other hand, there is the younger group of viewers that did not experience songs as *Just Like Heaven* the first time they were famous, the ones that appropriated the music from decades past. For them, the memories and the universality of the emotions is real, but this is the generation that lacks the life-soundtrack, as they perceive it, that soundtrack that feels poignant, and that was marked by the presence of the Event. This generation did not see The Cure live, or listen to them during their prime, but they will try to bring back the meaning in music, and its importance in life, by creating an artificial collective identity that looks towards the past as a point of reference; the past that is always presented in a better light, the same past fabricated by the media. It reveals that it is fabricated because the characters in *Adventureland* benefit from a meticulously selected soundtrack decided for them, which extracts the best from the 1980s and repackages it.

Listening to *Just Like Heaven* while riding bumper cars is a constructed image, a perfect snapshot of idleness and youth, enhanced by the seemingly perfect song. It is a throwback to one of the tropes of nostalgia films. *American Graffiti* used the same mechanisms, in terms of music, that are now commonplace. The music in that film, much like the one in *Adventureland*, romanticizes the time and the place, the now. For any generation it is a mechanism that works, because 'another way of preserving the Lost Moment is to surround yourself with its remains' (Reynolds, 2011, p. 299). The older generations can thus cherish their older memories while the newer ones are holding on to the same memories, aside from their own, desiring the same kind of music for themselves, for music is a form of art, which by being connected to the Event, to the moment, makes the present in which it was heard meaningful. It linked the members of a generation to each other, a lack felt by the newer and the current generations.

In another scene, the characters are celebrating the 4th of July and watching the fireworks that can be seen from the amusement park. James inches closer to Em and they look longingly towards the fireworks. The whole scene plays out to the rhythms of Crowded House's *Don't Dream It's Over*, a song that peaked at number 2 in The Billboard Top 100 in 1987 (All Media

Network, LLC.), and like *Just Like Heaven* before it, instantly evokes the 1980s through its various uses in the media. Furthermore, it is another example of an idyllic song accompanying a scene, not regarding the lyrics, which are sad and disillusioned, but regarding the feel of the song. It is a languid and a much slower song than most of the other ones used in the film, and in this particular scene it contributes to an overall feel of hope and disillusionment.

Interestingly enough, even inside the film's narrative there are nostalgic musical links to the past. Throughout the film, at various times, there are references being made to Lou Reed and his songs, as well as to the songs of the band The Velvet Underground (of which Lou Reed was a member). The Lou Reed and The Velvet Underground's songs are played during key scenes in the film: *Here She Comes Now* can be heard as the opening credits play, *Pale Blue Eyes* is used as diegetic music when James and Em are driving back home (as the song is one of the ones on James's mixtape) and *Satellite of Love* is playing when James confesses to Mike that he is in love with Em. These references are heard, whereas Lou Reed is frequently talked about by the characters and considered one of their favourite musicians. The characters' nostalgia is for a band and an artist that were recording and playing in the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, which does not stop the music from being relevant for young adults in the late 1980s.

The Velvet Underground were hugely influential when they were recording, but even more so after they disbanded. The band became known and appreciated since, aside from their musical prowess, they 'spoke in no uncertain terms of social alienation, sexual deviancy, drug addiction, violence, and hopelessness, evoking the exhilaration and destructiveness of modern urban life' (Rolling Stone). Hence, The Velvet Underground are one of the bands that captured the moment and the Event, which is absent from contemporary society. The Event is marked by 'this very topicality, this date-stamped quality', which 'is what causes it to become quickly dated and then, after a decent interval, so potently epoch-evoking, so revivable' (Reynolds, 2011, pp. xviii - xix). In this instance, for both the characters of the film and for the audience there is a feeling of nostalgia for the 1960s, doubled by that for the 1980s. Whereas the 1980s are evoked through the fashion and the décor, the presence of the 1960s in the narrative is realized only with the help of music. In the car scene, when *Pale Blue Eyes* can be heard, the song envelops everything, and expresses what the characters themselves are not saying, since it is a scene without any lines. *Pale Blue Eyes* becomes the focus of the viewer's attention; the images fade much like the black clothes orchestra performers usually dress in, to let the music take centre

stage. The song, as used in the film, manages to replace the image in the viewer's attention, demonstrating how popular songs can be more important in a film than the image.

Rock Me Amadeus, performed by Falco, is one of the other culturally relevant songs for the period in which the film's action takes place, having been released in 1986, but the exasperating and exaggerated way in which it is played throughout the film is an ironic nod to the ubiquity of the song in those times, since the characters can no longer stand hearing it every day. Remembering a song because it was played everywhere when one was younger is another form of nostalgia, especially since *Rock Me Amadeus* is used in a diegetic way, the characters hear it because it is played at the amusement park every day. Moreover, it is also a play on the tropes of nostalgia films, which insist on using music that will be closely associated with a period in history.

In one of the last scenes, when James decides to go to New York City regardless of the uncertainty of his life and studies there, a moment that marks his transition towards an adult life, the viewers can hear The Replacements' *Unsatisfied*, a song taken of the band's album *Let It Be*, an album included by the magazine Rolling Stone in its '100 Best Albums of The Eighties' top (Rolling Stone). The song plays out while James looks hopefully out the window, seemingly having decided what he wants to do at this moment in his life. The lyrics accentuate the coming-of-age aspect of this scene. The singer asks the listener rhetorically if he (the singer) is satisfied. The song has an anthem-like feel, it is powerful, raw and a way to reminisce on how one felt unsatisfied throughout his youth, while still looking hopefully towards the future. The anthem is what is perceived as missing from the current generation, which can only substitute this loss by means of popular culture.

All of the songs in the soundtrack function because the style of the songs is recognizable, therefore evoking generational belonging. The fact that music is freely shared nowadays and known by everyone is more important than if the viewers would know all of the songs, it is sufficient that the sound be reminiscent of a period in history. Therefore, the soundtrack does not need to 'literally bring the past to life for the viewer but give the impression of such an experience, creating a fictional set of memories that (...) may actually come to replace the audience's "original" sense of the past' (Schumway, 1999, p. 40). The false depiction will be taken for granted by those that have not experienced the real past, whereas the ones who did will indulge in the romanticized portrayal of their youth.

At the beginning, the compiled soundtrack was first used to inspire generational solidarity, in films such as *Easy Rider* (1969). Afterwards, the compiled soundtrack was also used to transmit nostalgia, by its use in films that fondly portrayed the past. *Adventureland*, like other nostalgia films before it uses old songs ‘to evoke the fiction of a common past’ (Schumway, 1999, p. 40). Consequently, *Adventureland* succeeds in transmitting nostalgia as well as a sense of generational identity for more than one generation through the use of powerfully evocative songs that belong to the 1980s and some to the 1960s and 1970s. The nostalgia it inspires, for the 1980s, works on more levels and is felt not only by the generation that it depicts, but also for the newer generations, that have appropriated the sound of those years by way of collective and cultural memory. Their nostalgic feelings are triggered by ‘a general impression of a decade, generation, or Zeigeist’ (van Dijck, 2009, p. 110) that is realized through the evocative music of that generation. Therefore, their nostalgia is not based on their own lives, but is present nonetheless, ‘even when the respondent realizes that remembrance cannot possibly be rooted in actually lived experience’ (van Dijck, 2009, p. 110).

Conclusion

In this study nostalgia and collective nostalgia were discussed as being linked to society and to several mechanisms, of which music in films was the focus. Particularly, popular songs were analysed in their power to call to mind autobiographic memories as well as false memories, created through an idealized depiction of periods and generations in mass media. It was discussed that memories are imperfect and can be manipulated by employing music in order to repeatedly portray times and places that have acquired a privileged role. However, these mechanisms work because, as it was demonstrated, collective memory has been particularly fascinated by the past that, through a nostalgic view which has always existed in history, was glamorized and repeatedly represented in various mediums, such as film. Therefore, the mediums that produce nostalgic depictions, such as the nostalgia film, were seen as perpetuators of nostalgia that constantly refer to the past to guarantee a link with the public. Additionally, the viewers are the ones that are tricked into missing what they have not lost as well, by the mass media, through their romanticized portrayal of history and of music.

Since nostalgic tendencies were seen as exposing an underlying identity crisis, which requires a return to a past that is thought to be better than the present, a past that is often fictional and that has more to do with a desire to return to a mythical paradise, it was discussed that collective nostalgia reveals more about the present than it does about the past. In this sense, nostalgia films and the appropriation of past musical styles or songs are part of a universal process of recording and treasuring the past. Technological advancements were analysed as an integral part of this process that began in the twentieth-century as they have changed the way history is viewed and recorded. Film was one of the first mediums that allowed the public to see the past, through documentaries or fictional accounts, proving to be essential for this analysis. Additionally, contemporary society has access to an unlimited historical archive made available with the advent of virtual mediums, such as the internet. Music, particularly, benefited from these mediums, especially taking into consideration how much sites like Youtube facilitated listening to older songs at any moment. Moreover, music was seen as being one of the most important ways of bringing to mind a particular period in history, as it has the unique quality of being both heavily associated with the moment of its release as well as being appealing to the

newer generations. As such, popular songs connect individual and group biographies, through their presence in the collective memory. Furthermore, the only element present in nostalgia films that is truly from that past films are keen on recreating is music, thus becoming the primary way of inducing nostalgia. Collective nostalgia for the past was discussed as having an important role in generating the continuous use of iconic songs or of the specific sound of other generations' music. Hence, collective nostalgia depends on mass media since 'nostalgia as a historical emotion came of age at the time of Romanticism and is coeval with the birth of mass culture' (Boym, 2001, p. 16) creating a vicious circle.

Given that nostalgia has a significant role to play in all of these processes, it was demonstrated that the current social and cultural context, in which pastiche and appropriation of older styles is commonplace, has been favourable to the proliferation of nostalgic feelings. Therefore, films such as *Adventureland* are guaranteed a public that is made out of not only the generation which it is directly depicting, but also the newer ones, that have had access to an increasingly growing historical archive, that encompasses virtually everything, including popular songs. In this context of constant allusion to the past, the limits between the musical symbols that define generations are blurred, and they can all be felt as belonging to the present. Furthermore, nostalgia exists because people feel lost, feel a longing for something that is not present here, and now, regardless of what here and now is. And there has to be an ideal to look up to, the ideal that will always generate nostalgia. The only way to surpass it would be to reach this ideal, but, by definition, it cannot be realized. Consequently, nostalgia will not disappear, because we are incapable of reaching perfection, and anything else will always be lacking.

Therefore, this study showed that nostalgia, as it interferes with collective memory, can lead to false memories of the past and that the images created as a result of this are viewed as being authentic, supported by elements that trick the human perception, such as music. In this sense, the nostalgia film was discussed as being a poignant example, since it is a medium that, by using music in its depiction of the past, manages to create a portrayal of society that can substitute the real past in collective memory and that causes nostalgic feelings for something that cannot be reached, be it the real past, as well as its glamourized image. For instance, *Adventureland* is set in the 1980s, the time and space being clearly visible for anyone acquainted with the landmarks and trends of that decade, but the emotional recreation of the decade is evoked through the use of a compiled soundtrack, that focuses on songs that are instantly

recognizable, whether it is the songs themselves that are known in popular culture, or their specific 1980s sound that inspires recognition in the viewer.

As a result, it is society's nostalgic tendency that produced a preferred view of history, and of the music thereof, which in turn lead to the constant reproduction of history and of the most representative songs of decades past. Thus, this study interpreted nostalgia through its manifestations in popular culture and how it all points to a society that has redirected a memory and history crisis into a constant revival the past.

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